TEACHING SHAKESPEARE'S JULIUS CAESAR TO HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years instructors of the English language arts in the secondary school have required their students to read Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. This drama is an excellent choice for young students to begin their study of Shakespeare's plays because here they may discover the beautiful comprehensiveness of Shakespeare's mind and the constructive genius of his dramatic art displayed with relative simplicity. Some consider it to be the best classical tragedy in the English language.[1] "The distinctive contribution of drama is not to afford a framework for dazzling gems of poetry, imagination, or social philosophy, but rather to tell by means of the speech and behavior of believable people a striking story of life."[2] So it is with Julius Caesar.

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to present a plan for teaching Shakespeare's Julius Caesar to high school sophomores.

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[1]Harold S. Wilson, On the Design of Shakespearean Tragedy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 97.

[2]Algernon De Vivier Tassin, "Julius Caesar," Columbia University Lectures on Shakespeare; see Brander Matthews (ed.), Shakespearean Studies (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1916), p. 255.

Procedures used. The plan of the study was threefold: (1) A survey of the views of Caesar and Brutus in Shakespeare's era was made based upon historical, literary, and dramatic traditions; (2) a survey of modern criticism was made based upon significant points of disagreement among major modern critics; and (3) a teaching plan was formulated based upon the writer's experiences and current practices and proposals in the presentation of the play.

Importance of the study. One of the most important goals of writing good drama is that of character development.[1] Shakespeare's characters display varying degrees of good and evil and help students to comprehend the complexities of human behavior. It is important that students observe man struggling with his fellow men and with himself in order to gain a greater comprehension of their own environment.

In the study of the play, one must be cognizant of different historical periods. William Shakespeare wrote of a period in Roman history which was immensely appealing to his Elizabethan audience, who saw a parallel between their own age and the Caesarean era.[2] Shakespeare has inculcated

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[1]J. I. M. Stewart, Character and Motive in Shakespeare (London: Longmans, Green and Company, Ltd., 1959), p. 118.

[2]James Emerson Phillips, Jr., The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), p. 173.

into the minds of twentieth century Americans the values of the Elizabethan period. The student then must relate his own experience to his knowledge of the Caesarean era. He must see a comparison between contemporary men desirous of political power and the characters in Shakespeare's play. This will add to his knowledge and understanding of modern day power struggles.

A teaching plan was developed in order to help the student participate in the revelations of the play and to gain much insight into the traditional stumbling block of the play--Shakespeare's language. The teacher must accept his responsibility to elucidate the linguistic problems in the play in order that the student may fully appreciate and understand Shakespeare's genius.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND: VIEWS OF CAESAR AND BRUTUS IN SHAKESPEARE'S ERA

Julius Caesar is one of Shakespeare's most controversial plays. Perhaps the most significant problem grows out of the conflicting views of Caesar found in historical, literary, and dramatic traditions which influenced Shakespeare's conception of this character. Critics also are concerned with Shakespeare's conception of Brutus and the use of his source material.

Historical views. Before the student can understand the meaning and significance of the entire play, he must be made aware of the different views of Caesar and Brutus in Shakespeare's lifetime. Although critics disagree concerning Caesar's image in the Renaissance, most agree with Ribner that there is no one typically Elizabethan view of Caesar.[1] Shakespeare undoubtedly read of the story of Caesar's death in other places besides Plutarch, as it was the most widely known event of Roman history.[2] However, most critics regard

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[1]Irving Ribner, Patterns in Shakespearean Tragedy (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960), p. 54.

[2]George Lyman Kittredge (ed.), The Tragedy of Julius Caesar (New York: Grolier, Inc., 1939), p. x.

Plutarch's Lives as the immediate and most significant source.

Actually, Shakespeare read Sir Thomas North's English translation of The Lives of Noble Grecians and Romans which was a translation of Jacques Amyot's French version, which itself was influenced by a Latin translation of the original Greek version. As Kittredge pointed out, Shakespeare was working with a source twice removed from the original Plutarch account which had undergone some changes in emphasis and detail.[1] This may account for some of the division of the opinions of critics concerning Shakespeare's use of Plutarch's Lives.

Dover Wilson noted that in earlier criticism there was some disagreement concerning Shakespeare's use of Plutarch's Lives. He commented that an earlier critic, R. C. Trench, found that Shakespeare absolutely depended on Plutarch and there was almost nothing in the events of the play that did not come directly from Plutarch. Subsequent earlier critics in chronological order such as Aldis Wright, Gollancz, and Herford agreed with Trench; and then came MacCallum, who developed a whole chapter in the discussion of Shakespeare's transmutation of his source material. Wilson concluded that Shakespeare was faced with two compelling desires: one, the dramatist's desire to make as good a stage play as possible;

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[1] Ibid.

the other, the poet's desire to present history in a substantially accurate and ideally true fashion. Shakespeare could manipulate his source at will, altering or adding to it as his dramatic purpose required.[1]

Wilson also observed that Shakespeare perceived Roman history from the point of view of sixteenth century translators who transformed the noble Romans into the doublet and hose of French and English gentlemen, and Rome had the appearance of a neo-classic commonwealth. As a result of this, Wilson felt that Shakespeare was forced to assign motives impossible to ancient Romans and to create characters that Plutarch hardly would have recognized.[2] One of these characters is Brutus.

Almost all critics agree that Shakespeare used Plutarch as his sole source in the character delineation of Brutus. Most critics agreed with MacCallum that Shakespeare painted his portrait of Brutus upon the idealized image that Plutarch had already depicted. "Marcus Brutus, having framed his manners of life by the rules of virtue and the study of philosophy, and having employed his wit, which was constant and gentle, in attempting of great things, methinks he was

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[1]John Dover Wilson (ed.), Julius Caesar (Cambridge: The University Press, 1964), p. xiv.

[2]Ibid., pp. xv-xvi.

rightly made and framed unto virtue."[1] "For to Plutarch Brutus was, so to speak, the model republican, the paragon of private and civic virtue."[2]

Moreover, Shakespeare omitted much from Plutarch which might have reflected unfavorably on Brutus and obscured the dramatic issue. For instance, Plutarch wrote, "When Caesar was a young man, he had been acquainted with Servilia, the mother of Brutus, who was extremely in love with him. And because Brutus was born in that time when their love was the hottest, he persuaded himself that he begat him."[3] Kittredge observed the purification of Brutus in the play because of the obvious omission from Plutarch of any suggestion that Brutus might have been the illegitimate son of Caesar.[4]

Kittredge also observed the omission of the rivalry for position between Brutus and Cassius, with Caesar's constant favor toward Brutus in spite of the more valid claims of his rival.[5] Plutarch said that Brutus and Cassius were

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[1]Tucker Brooke (ed.), Shakespeare's Plutarch (London: Chatto and Windus, 1909), p. 140.

[2]Mungo W. MacCallum, Shakespeare's Roman Plays and Their Background (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1925), p. 233.

[3]Op. cit., p. 145.

[4]Kittredge, op. cit.

[5]Ibid.

competing for the office of the Praetor of the City and that they strove against one another, even though they were allied together because Cassius had married Junia, Brutus' sister. "Brutus with his virtue and good name contended against many noble exploits in arms which Cassius had done against the Parthians. Caesar told his friends, 'Cassius' cause is the juster, but Brutus must first be preferred.'"[1]

Plutarch described the extortionate usury and abrupt divorce of Brutus which Shakespeare passed over in silence.[2] Thus, Brutus is for Shakespeare "a patriotic gentleman of the best Roman or best English type."[3]

Besides the stories of Brutus and Caesar in Plutarch's Lives, other historical accounts of the death of Caesar that Shakespeare might have read in translation were those of Cicero, Lucan, Suetonius, and Appian which illustrated different impressions of Caesar and Brutus by writers of the Roman era. Among historical and literary accounts of the Renaissance era, perhaps the most significant one is that of Michel de Montaigne which may have helped shape Shakespeare's view of the events in his play.[4]

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[1] Op. cit.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Kittredge, op. cit.

[4] Ibid.

In these historical accounts, certain views of Caesar, his possible tyranny and his tragedy, may be ascertained which were current in the Renaissance. Plutarch had seen the desire for kingship as the cause of Caesar's tragedy:

> But the chiefest cause that made him mortally hated was the covetous desire he had to be called king; which first gave the people just cause and next his secret enemies honest color, to bear him ill will.[1]

Originating in Plutarch's observation of Caesar's character quoted above, and quoted by a long line of Renaissance writers, was the view of Caesar as a great hero who became so puffed with pride and ambition that he destroyed the most noble edifice ever created by man, the Roman republic.[2]

Lucan and Cicero viewed Caesar as a tyrant who deserved destruction. In fact, Lucan burned with hatred for tyranny in general, and for Caesar, destroyer of the Republic, in particular. In much the same vein, Cicero wrote in a letter to Atticus on April 27, 44 B.C., that the tyrant was dead though tyranny still persisted. He couldn't find praise enough for Brutus and Cassius to whom he referred as "the partners in that most glorious deed."[3] Together, Lucan and Cicero represent the republican point of view.

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[1]Brooke, op. cit., p. 90.

[2]Ribner, op. cit.

[3]E. O. Winstedt (trans.), Cicero, Letter to Atticus (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1912), p. 18.

On the other hand, Suetonius and Appian regarded Caesar as one of the greatest heroes that had ever lived. Suetonius noted that Caesar was kind and considerate toward his friends and could change former enemies into friends; he would avenge wrongs in a merciful manner. Suetonius regarded Brutus and Cassius as assassins who had impiously slain Caesar.[1] Appian commented that the excuse for the conspiracy, the prospect of an additional title, turned on a mere quibble, "since in plain fact 'dictator' is exactly the same as 'king'"[2] He spoke of Brutus and Cassius as "the murderers who had perpetrated their gloomy crime, in a sacred place, on one whose person was sacred and inviolable."[3] Thus, Suetonius and Appian have condemned Brutus and Cassius for the murder of a great and noble leader who had attempted to preserve the Roman Empire. These historians represent the monarchic idealist point of view.

Views in the literary tradition. The literary tradition was just as divided as the historical tradition with conflicting views of Caesar during the Renaissance. This

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[1] J. E. Rolfe (trans.), Suetonius, The Lives of the Caesars (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), p. 27.

[2] Horace White (trans.), Appian, Roman History (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), p. 48.

[3] Ibid.

division in views may have influenced Shakespeare. Kittredge observed, "Caesar was always the greatest man the world has ever known and his murder so cataclysmic as to be compared with the crucifixion of Christ."[1] Indeed, Dante placed Brutus and Cassius in the fourth and last round of the ninth circle of Hell, reserved for those who have betrayed their benefactors. Dante wrote:

> That upper spirit who hath worst punishment
> Is Judas, he hath his head within
> And plies the feet without. Of th' other two
> Whose heads are under, from the murky jaw
> Who hangs, is Brutus: lo! how he doth writhe
> And speaks not. The other, Cassius, that appears
> So large of limb.[2]

Landino struggled to extricate Brutus from the unworthy lot which is here assigned to him. He maintained that Dante's Brutus and Cassius were not meant the individuals known by those names, but any who put a lawful monarch to death. Yet if Caesar were such, the conspirators might be regarded as deserving of their doom. If Dante, however, believed Brutus to be actuated by evil motives in putting Caesar to death, Eliot noted that the excellence of the patriot's character in other respects would have only aggravated his guilt in

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[1]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xii.

[2]Charles W. Eliot (ed.), The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), p. 144.

that particular.[1] Kittredge concluded that, "Brutus and Cassius were placed in the very lowest circle of Hell, damned as the killers of their temporal lord, just as Judas was damned as the betrayer of his spiritual lord."[2] Apparently, Dante was a monarchic idealist who saw Caesar as a martyr and Brutus and Cassius as his evil destroyers who put their lawful monarch to death.

Montaigne, on the other hand, after having praised Caesar's greatness, "the wonderful parts wherewith he was indued, his sobriety, his greatness, his clemency, and the incomparable grandeur of his soul,"[3] continued:

> But all those noble characteristics were stifled in this furious passion of ambition by which he allowed himself so far to be controlled that it might be called the very helm and rudder of his actions. . . . He was so drunk with vanity that in the presence of his fellow-citizens he dared . . . to say that his decisions should thenceforth serve as laws and . . . suffered himself to be worshipped as a god in person. To conclude, it was this vice alone, in my opinion, that destroyed the finest and richest character that ever was, and has rendered his memory abhorent to all men of good will, inasmuch as he sought his own glory in the ruin of his country and in the destruction of the mightiest and most flourishing commonwealth that the world will ever see.[4]

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[1] Ibid., n.

[2] Kittredge, op. cit.

[3] Donald M. Frame (trans.), The Complete Essays of Montaigne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), p. 544.

[4] Ibid.

Dover Wilson observed that Brutus was honored as a saint in Renaissance Italy by all republicans and most literary and artistic circles.[1] A common Renaissance view of Caesar was that of a great hero, carried away by pride and ambition, who refused to acknowledge his own limitations and aspired to a position of godhood.

Views in the dramatic tradition. The preceding view is also apparent in the predominant dramatic tradition of the Renaissance. The three known European plays about Caesar follow the tradition of the Roman dramatist Seneca in the portrayal of Caesar as a pompous tyrant who gave long bombastic speeches and constantly referred to himself in the third person as he boasted of himself and his mighty deeds as a world conqueror.

Only one pre-Shakespearean English play, Caesar's Revenge, written by an unknown dramatist, has survived. It has one striking link with Shakespeare's play: the 'evil spirit', as Plutarch merely called it, which appeared to Brutus before Philippi is identified as Caesar's ghost, and like Andrea's in the Spanish Tragedy, becomes the symbol and mouthpiece of revenge.[2] Dover Wilson felt that the

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[1]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xxiii.

[2]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xi.

ghost reached Shakespeare from an earlier English tradition and that Caesar of Caesar's Revenge was more like "the conquering Hercules" of tradition than that of Shakespeare's play. In short, Dover Wilson concluded, Shakespeare was following both established dramatic tradition and the historical scholarship of his age when he gave his Caesar that "strut, that habit of self-deification which annoys many modern readers."[1]

[1] Op. cit., p. xxvii.

CHAPTER III

VIEWS OF JULIUS CAESAR IN MODERN CRITICISM

Introduction. It is important for the high school student to be aware of the conflicting views in modern criticism concerning certain critical aspects of the play. Differing views tend to polarize on the tyranny of Caesar, the title and theme, the plot and structure, the role of Brutus as the center of the tragedy, as well as differing interpretations of the political aspects of the play. The instructor should point out to his students that critics tend to focus on Caesar in the historical, literary, and dramatic traditions of the Renaissance because of the world renown of the person under consideration. However, in modern criticism, most critics tend to focus on Brutus because of his central position within the play. The bridge between the historical focus on Caesar and the modern focus on Brutus seems to be the relative importance of Julius Caesar as a tyrant for many critics.

Modern views of the tyranny of Caesar. Some modern critics such as Dover Wilson and Palmer found the concept of the tyranny of Caesar rather significant; others like Ribner and Kittredge found it moderately important; and still others such as Granville-Barker and Harrison found it rather insignificant.

Dover Wilson found that one of the major criticisms directed against the structure of the play is the supposed lack of unity which has its roots in the role of Caesar either as a tyrant or a benevolent dictator. Wilson chose to defend the structural unity of the play; and as a consequence of this position he held that Caesar was "a Roman Tamburlaine of illimitable ambition and ruthless irresistible genius; a monstrous tyrant who destroyed his country. . . ."[1] The importance of the tyranny of Caesar was extremely significant in Wilson's analysis of the play.

Another critic, Palmer, in his critical analysis of the political character of Brutus, discovered that Caesar is already a full-blown tyrant at the beginning of the play,[2] a fact which Brutus is unable to recognize in his perception of the Roman leader. The tyranny of Caesar was a central factor in Palmer's analysis of Brutus.

Among critics who considered the tyranny of Caesar from a different perspective, and of moderate importance in their respective analyses, were Ribner and Kittredge.

Ribner recognized that Caesar is not a king, but rather a great general who replaces another great general,

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[1]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xxv.

[2]John Palmer, Political Characters of Shakespeare (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1948), p. 7.

Pompey; Caesar aspires to be king and is murdered for his aspiration. This critic suggested that Shakespeare explored the view of Caesar as a would-be tyrant based upon the Senecan tradition of the Renaissance.[1] In Ribner's analysis the most significant fact which emerged was that Caesar was not a lawful monarch.

Kittredge discerned the character of Caesar in much the same manner as Ribner except that Kittredge did not emphasize the tradition of the Senecan tyrant as strongly in his analysis.[2] Both critics concluded that Caesar makes a wrong moral choice in his decision to go to the Senate House to accept the crown.

Perhaps the critics who conceived of the tyranny of Caesar to be least significant in their respective analyses were Granville-Barker and Harrison. Granville-Barker saw the character of Caesar as a great shadow that looms over the entire play and, as a result of this perspective, queried, "Is it too harsh a comment that Caesar is in the play merely to be assassinated?"[3] Then, this critic proceeded to formulate an answer to his question in his suggestion of Caesar as

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[1]Ribner, op. cit., p. 55.

[2]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xiv.

[3]Harley Granville-Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 162.

a facade of reality, a frigid tyrant without virtue, an historical figure which Shakespeare never really came to grips with so that the audience's knowledge of Caesar remains skin-deep.[1]

Harrison also argued that the great dictator has a very minor part in his own play and is simply an elderly, second-rate specimen of the stage tyrant.[2]

Views on title and theme. The instructor needs to point out to his students conflicting views concerning the title and theme of the play which are directly related to the identification of the hero or central character in the play. Most critics agree that Brutus is the central character; however, as MacCallum suggested, the play was given exactly the right title because there was a prevalent curiosity about Caesar in Elizabethan England, and thus the title was a tremendous commercial asset.[3] Even though Brutus was the protagonist for MacCallum, he found imperialist inspiration in Caesar's presence, his genius and his domination of the story; therefore, the play was aptly named for him.[4] MacCallum stated the theme as follows: "Shakespeare

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[1] Ibid.

[2] G. B. Harrison, Shakespeare's Tragedies (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1956), p. 65.

[3] MacCallum, op. cit., p. 168.

[4] Ibid., p. 214.

makes it abundantly clear that the rule of the single master-mind is the only admissable solution for the problem of the time."[1] In 1910, before two world wars had darkened the scene, this was an acceptable explanation. However, more recent critics have interpreted the theme somewhat differently.

Dover Wilson found the theme to be liberty versus tyranny which was reflected in the future of Rome.[2] Wilson felt that if the play were written in modern times it might have been called Caesar and Caesarism, but abstract words were not then in style; yet Shakespeare's title was adequate enough in view of what the name "Julius Caesar" stood for in 1599.[3]

Dorsch concurred with Dover Wilson regarding the theme which was reflected in the dominating spirit of Caesar throughout the play. He also agreed with Wilson regarding the title when he said, ". . . the play, though it rightly bears Caesar's name, is rather The Death and Revenge of Julius Caesar, than The Tragedy of Julius Caesar, for its tragedy is the tragedy of Marcus Brutus,"[4] a view consistent with MacCallum's opinion of the significance of the title.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xxi.

[3] Ibid.

[4] T. S. Dorsch (ed.), Julius Caesar (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. xliv.

Harrison observed that a modern writer would probably have preferred to entitle the play Death Comes to the Dictator because that is what happened in the story.[1] This observation was similar to that of Dover Wilson.

Many major modern critics have observed that the title was acceptable for the reasons given heretofore, but they offered slightly differing interpretations on the theme. Among these critics were Kittredge, Palmer, Ribner, and Granville-Barker. Kittredge found that the theme is best interpreted by what Brutus and Cassius, in effect, succeed in doing for their country, which is evident in Antony's triumph at the end of the play.[2] Palmer focused on Brutus and discovered an essential theme of the play to be that Brutus is a man divided against himself and that the dominant theme is Antony's revenge for the murder of Caesar.[3] Ribner considered the usurpation of power to be the basic question of the play; and the larger theme, the tragedy of Rome which emanates from the subordinate themes of the tragedies of Brutus and Caesar.[4] Granville-Barker stated the theme in the

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[1]Harrison, op. cit.

[2]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xviii.

[3]Palmer, op. cit., p. 8.

[4]Ribner, op. cit., p. 53.

form of a rhetorical question: "Do evil that good may come, and see what does come."[1] All of these interpretations of the theme reflect the continuous conflict between the forces of Caesar and the forces of Brutus.

Among critics who felt that the position of Brutus should have been given more emphasis in the title were Tassin and Voltaire. Reflecting the earlier view of Voltaire, Tassin felt that calling the play Brutus would have shaken the play into a shape more compact than any other Shakespearean tragedy except Othello.[2] Perhaps Houghton reflected the spirit of the title problem most adequately in his observation that, "even if there is some uncertainty perhaps in the presentation of Caesar, and even if the play is almost the tragedy of Brutus, it must like the English history plays, bear the title of the chief man in it."[3] Houghton indicated that the play is almost the tragedy of Brutus whereas Tassin was quite definite in his observation that the play is the tragedy of Brutus which was in line with the opinions of major modern critics.

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[1]Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 161.

[2]Tassin, op. cit.

[3]E. C. Houghton (ed.), Julius Caesar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 8.

Modern views of the role of Brutus as the center of the tragedy. High school students need to comprehend the role of Brutus in the play. Many critics identified Brutus as the central character for various reasons. Among critics who perceived Brutus in this role for similar reasons were Tassin, Dorsch, and Kittredge. Tassin saw Brutus as the actual hero as early as the second scene of the first act. His reasoning behind this view was that Shakespeare omitted the temptation to focus upon the action of the games and Caesar's presence, in order to emphasize the development of the character of Brutus and Cassius. Moreover, Tassin felt that all the sympathetic side scenes later in the play were invented by Shakespeare in order to focus his concern on the character development of Brutus.[1]

Dorsch agreed with Tassin in that Shakespeare was greatly interested in the mind of Brutus and focused the audience's interest upon the deliberations and decisions of Brutus at almost every stage in the play.[2] Kittredge concurred with Dorsch and Tassin and found Brutus to be a very subtle character.[3]

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[1]Tassin, loc. cit.

[2]Dorsch, op. cit., p. xxxix.

[3]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xv.

Granville-Barker disagreed with Tassin on the exact moment of the identification of the pre-eminence of Brutus in the play. Granville-Barker found the quarrel scene and the news of Portia's death in the fourth act to clearly establish Brutus as the most prominent figure in the play. Brutus achieves a heroic height as he goes toward his doom unregretful and clear-eyed.[1]

MacCallum noted that Shakespeare presents a highly idealized portrait of Plutarch's Brutus, especially in the affectionate nature which Brutus displays toward his wife. "For his amiable and attractive virtues are saved from all taint of weakness by an heroic strain, both high-spirited and public-spirited, both stoical and chivalrous."[2]

Many critics such as Ribner, Whitaker, Granville-Barker, Dover Wilson, and Kittredge identified Brutus as a tragic hero of the Aristotelian type. These critics based their judgment on Aristotle's criteria for a tragic hero. Aristotle wrote that a tragic hero should be

> The intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity. . . . The change in the hero's fortunes must be not from misery to happiness but

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[1]Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 167.

[2]MacCallum, op. cit., p. 237.

> on the contrary from happiness to misery; and the cause of it must lie not in any depravity, but in some great error on his part; the man himself being either such as we have described, or better, not worse, than that.[1]

Brutus fulfills this role primarily through his tragic error; i.e., the murder of his friend and the ensuing personal and political chaos which occurs in Rome. Ribner, Whitaker, Granville-Barker, Dover Wilson, and Kittredge denounced Brutus' wrong moral choice.

In considering Brutus as the center of the tragedy, Granville-Barker observed, "A hero . . . is the character of which a dramatist, not morally, but artistically, most approves. Shakespeare's sympathy with Brutus doesn't imply approval of the murder of Caesar; it only means that he ultimately finds the spiritual problem of the virtuous murderer the most interesting thing in the story."[2]

One of the consequences of using Brutus as the center of the tragedy was the view of his death as a symbol of a greater disaster, the death of liberty. The heart of his tragedy was the defeat of his cause and his defeat was brought about through the corruption and instability of human nature.[3]

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[1]W. D. Ross (ed.), Aristotle Selections (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 341.

[2]Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 161.

[3]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xx.

Another consequence lies in the contrast between what men propose, and what as political beings they achieve. Cassius brings Brutus to see not a reality, an objective vision of his strength and weakness, but the shadow of the imperfectly understood desires which finally brings him, not the affirmation of his ideals, but to personal and public ruin. One of the lessons of Brutus' tragedy is that the names of things, however noble and consoling in their abstraction, are no substitute for a balanced consideration of their reality. Honor is in the way of becoming a trap set for those who, like Brutus, fail to temper idealism with a proper measure of self-awareness. Brutus is a doctrinaire idealist.[1]

Stirling pointed out that modern readers usually find the tragedy of Brutus in his devotion to justice and fair play. Many members of the Globe audience, however, believed that his virtues were complicated by self-deception and doubtful principle.[2] One of the reasons for this change in views is the change in popular attitudes toward the concept of democracy compared to that of monarchy.

MacCallum observed that Shakespeare built up a virtuous character in Brutus, one who is not set free from the

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[1]Derek Traversi, Shakespeare: The Roman Plays (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 15.

[2]Brents Stirling, Unity in Shakespearean Tragedy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 40.

self-consciousness and the self-confidence of the specialist in virtue and therefore exposed to peculiar dangers.[1] MacCallum analyzed the character of Brutus to discover that the essence of his spirit is his loyalty to duty, his chief concern is the inward life and the well-being of the soul, and his guiding principle is his morality.[2] Two sets of moral forces struggle within his heart. The first set contains the more personal sentiments of love and reverence for Caesar and detestation for the crime he contemplates, while the second set is composed of the more traditional ethical obligations to state, class, and house. As a result of his decision to accept the second set of moral forces, it is almost as fatal to be called Brutus as to be called Cinna in the play.[3]

Smith found that the character of Brutus is not a mystery. It is a presentation of a recurrent personality type that certainly embodies conflicts but that is certainly not inexplicable. A natural concomitant to Brutus' need to run everything and to his use of his own well-advertised virtue for doing so, is his conscious conviction that he has no substantial faults; he is pure virtue and intellect,

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[1]MacCallum, op. cit., p. 243.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

happily united in a self-sufficient team. His faults are seated in the very heart of his character. Brutus' character fault is his overbearing will; his moral fault is his Greek hybris or Christian pride--pride in his virtue and his righteousness.[1]

Ribner discovered that there were two facets to the tragedy of Brutus, the one directly related to the other. "His failure to lead the conspiracy stems directly from his other failure: to live up to his own ideals of conduct."[2] This inability springs from the root of his tragedy, his own separation of public from private morality. All of his tactical errors--all spring from his unwillingness to accept the logical consequences of his own immoral act. He argues from a standpoint of morality which has already been corrupted. The crime of Brutus, the virtuous murderer, is a violation of the closest bonds which tie man to man, bonds with which the audience instinctively identifies.[3]

Proser observed that Brutus is trapped within the contexts of history and politics. The character of Brutus is formed, in part by the limitations of history and politics.

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[1]Gordon Ross Smith, "Brutus, Virtue, and Will," Shakespeare Quarterly, X (Summer, 1959), 367.

[2]Ribner, op. cit., p. 60.

[3]Ibid., p. 61.

At the root of the problem of Brutus as the center of the tragedy lies a defect of vision. Brutus is the most honorable, the most morally conscious character in the play; yet, despite these high qualities, Brutus is not a god. His gentleness is both moving and admirable, but he is cruel enough to kill his friend. He is not noble enough to prevent what he, perhaps inadvisedly, conceives of as liberty from turning into political and moral chaos.[1]

Granville-Barker found that within Brutus existed a drama of inward struggle, triumph, and defeat. The development of Brutus is slow and proper enough in that Shakespeare built him up economically trait by trait. His self-consciousness reveals a flaw in moral strength. Brutus could command the conspirators, but he could not stir them; he is not a born leader. He fell into a role destined by history. The essential tragedy is centered in Brutus' own soul, the tragedy of a man who, not from hate, envy, or weakness, but from an error in judgment made one with the conspirators and murdered his friend.[2]

Dover Wilson commented that John Palmer saw the tragedy of Brutus clearer than any other modern critic.[3] Palmer

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[1]Matthew N. Proser, The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 22.

[2]Granville-Barker, op. cit.

[3]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xxviii.

observed that Brutus had precisely the qualities which in every age have rendered the conscientious liberal ineffectual in public life. Brutus' convictions required him to take the lead in a political conspiracy which, for its success, called for great agility of mind, deft and callous adjustment of means to ends, acceptance of the brutal consequences which attend an act of violence, and insight into the motives of men less scrupulous and disinterested than himself. In all these respects Brutus is deficient. Brutus plotting the assassination of Caesar, does violence to his character, enters into association with men whom he does not understand, and involves himself in events which he is unable to control. Brutus commits himself to a course of action which could only be justified by principles which had ceased to be valid for the society in which he lived and entangles himself in unforeseen consequences with which he is unable to cope. Thus, Brutus reveals confused thinking and a sharp divorce from political reality as is evident in his orchard soliloquy.[1]

> It must be by his death: and, for my part,
> I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
> But for the general--he would be crowned:
> How that might change his nature, there's the question.
> It is the bright day that brings forth the adder;
> And that craves wary walking. . .Crown him!--that!
> And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,

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[1]Palmer, op. cit.

That at his will he may do danger with.
Th'abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections swayed
More than his reason. But 'tis a common proof,
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend: so Caesar may;
Then, lest he may, prevent. And, since the quarrel
Will bear no color for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus: That what he is, augmented,
Would run to these and these extremities:
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg
Which hatched would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.[1]

Palmer observed that Brutus is concerned not with any abuse of power which Caesar has committed, not with any present evils of dictatorship, but with something which might happen. Palmer saw Brutus as the reflective idealist, living in imagination, and who was more impressed by the symbol of power than by power itself. Cassius uses the word "king" as no more than a bogey with which to frighten the republican philosopher. For Cassius it is a matter of indifference whether Caesar be called king, consul, or imperator, but with Brutus the difficulty is that Brutus cannot see things as they really are. He is obsessed by the theoretical horrors of kingship, by the republican traditions of his family, and by the hypothetical evils which might follow upon the violation of a preconceived theory of government.[2]

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[1]Dover Wilson, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

[2]Palmer, op. cit.

Whitaker gave the following analysis of the orchard soliloquy: Brutus made a false choice; Shakespeare expected his audience to detect a fallacy in the reasoning of Brutus. There are two basic assumptions implicit in the following statement that Brutus made: "It must be by his death." (1) Caesar could be prevented from being king only by killing him. This should be axiomatic to anyone with a knowledge of English history or Machiavelli and explicit in Brutus' first words. (2) Killing a ruler was justified only if he were a tyrant. This should have been clear to the audience since Cassius had just harped in the preceding scene on the weaknesses of those who submit to tyrants. It was clearly implied by reasoning throughout the soliloquy. Since Caesar's present conduct gave no warrant whatever for concluding that he would be a tyrant, and therefore for killing him, Brutus assumes that with absolute power he might become dangerous. Shakespeare has done his best to make the fallacies in reasoning obvious.[1]

Ribner discussed the charge that was often levelled against Brutus in his soliloquy. Ribner concluded that there was illogic in the action of Brutus, but it was not his decision that Caesar was a danger to Rome. The speech was logical

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[1]Virgil K. Whitaker, Shakespeare's Use of Learning (San Marino: The Huntington Library Press, 1953), pp. 224-227.

and focused upon the basic question of the usurpation of power. In Tudor political doctrine these lines were logical.[1]

Ribner found support in Dover Wilson's observation that Brutus' theme was the effect of power upon character and to crown Caesar would endow him with power that corrupted absolutely. So far, Brutus admits, Caesar has not shown himself the tyrant, but then he has not reached the top.[2]

> What is there "perplexing" (Coleridge) or "pedantic" (Verity) or "confused" (Palmer) or "fumbling" (Granville-Barker) in this or why should it be described as "a marvel of fanatical self-deception" (Herford)? That Brutus believes the end, of which he confesses at the moment he has no proof, justifies the means, which is murder, or that the means turn out to be entirely mistaken, has of course an important bearing upon his character and the political issue of the play as a whole. But Shakespeare does all he can to show us that the reading of Caesar's character in the soliloquy is correct.[3]

Proser discovered that Brutus had the ability to create vivid metaphors as a personality trait and these metaphors tended to be cosmetic, to hide the dreadful physical reality of the act under consideration. Even the "egg" metaphor in the orchard soliloquy was cosmetic to the degree that it blackened Caesar, thus making the assassination appear

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[1] Ribner , op. cit., p. 55.

[2] Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xxxi.

[3] Ibid.

more justifiable, more an act of "liberty." By the same token, he tended to "whiten" himself and the conspirators.[1]

When plotting the assassination, Brutus chooses to see himself as a kind of sacrificial high priest rather than a butcher. Most critics agreed that Brutus sought to find an element of noble sacrifice in an evil act which was not in it. Brutus, by taking the role of assassin, also assumes the role of savior in his liberating deed.[2]

Another significant action of Brutus for critics was the quarrel with Cassius in the fourth act. The instructor should point out to his students that this scene has evoked more comments by critics, audiences, and readers than any other scene in the play.[3] Most people find this scene highly redemptive of human values in a publicly oriented play. Critics have commented concerning the entire scene, but the focal point wherein critics disagreed is the speech of Brutus in which he explains his principles.

> Remember March, the ides of March remember!
> Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
> What villain touched his body, that did stab,
> And not for justice? What, shall one of us,
> That struck the foremost man of all this world
> But for supporting robbers, shall we now

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[1] Proser, op. cit., p. 31.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xx.

> Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
> And sell the mighty space of our large honors
> For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
> I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
> Than such a Roman.[1]

Many critics agreed that both Brutus and Cassius behaved like children in this scene. For example, Palmer interpreted this scene upon the level of two children wrangling for precedence, when it is stripped of moral implications and nobility of phrase. Even though childishly conditioned, it was still a noble scene and more poignant as the two friends grew closer together for having quarreled. This scene enlisted sympathy for the pathos and private human value of Brutus. The quarrel was redeemed for the tragedy of Brutus by the death of Portia.[2]

Granville-Barker observed that "Brutus sticks to principles at a time like this!"[3] By the Stoic's moral code, it was Cassius who was in the wrong. Granville-Barker perceived the cold realism of the idealist as self-evident in this scene.[4]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 67-78.

[2] Palmer, op. cit., pp. 48-50.

[3] Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 166.

[4] Ibid.

Ribner felt that Shakespeare made it abundantly clear that Brutus became aware of his moral error in this scene. Cassius had been committed to all immoral consequences since his first sinful act. Now Cassius argued the necessity for a relative slight immorality, that his bribe-taking officer Lucius Pella should not have been condemned. The pathetic irony of the self-deception of Brutus broke forth in all its vehemence. Through these lines came the vain effort of a man trying to convince himself of the truth of what he is already beginning to know is false. The audience knew that every man but Brutus stabs, "and not for justice." Brutus' awareness of his error finally emerged in the simple line "You have done that which you should be sorry for."[1]

Dover Wilson found that this scene increased the reader's knowledge and love for both Brutus and Cassius, and so by incalculably deepening the reader's pity for them raised the play to the heights of tragedy. The attitude of Cassius meant that the cause was utterly lost; nobody except Brutus believed in it or truly understood it at the end of the quarrel scene.[2] Thus, Dover Wilson and Irving Ribner held diametrically opposed views of Brutus' comprehension of the significance of the assassination of Julius Caesar.

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[1]Ribner, op. cit., p. 63.

[2]Dover Wilson, op. cit.

This scene was almost universally admired with two exceptions. It was alleged by Bradley to be a mere episode, the removal of which would not affect the sequence of events, and therefore dramatically indefensible.[1] Also Knights commented that the quarrel scene was a "tour de force" contrived by Shakespeare to hold the interest of the audience.[2]

Views on plot and structure. Granville-Barker noted the "powerful ease" in the construction of Julius Caesar. He described the play as a masterpiece of Elizabethan stagecraft. "Within the powerful ease of its larger rhythm, the constant, varied ebb and flow and interplay of purpose, character and event give it a richness of dramatic life. . . and the sense of lifelikeness."[3]

Dover Wilson noted that Granville-Barker praised Shakespeare's ability to make a living man out of a dozen lines of dialogue.[4] "The fifth act is a galaxy of such

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[1]A. C. Bradley, Shakespearean Tragedy (London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1909), p. 85.

[2]L. C. Knights, Further Explorations (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 1.

[3]Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 213.

[4]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xiii.

creations."[1] Much of the play's virtue lies in the continual invention and abundant vitality of these incidental characters. There is no formal mechanism of plot; it is largely with the aid of incidental figures that the action moves forward with such a varied rhythm. The whole play is alive; it is alive in every line.[2] Granville-Barker also observed that Shakespeare has always been more interested in character than plot. "However, this is Roman history and plot must count. His task now is less to elaborate or invent than to capture and transmit as much of such events and such men as his little London theater will hold."[3]

The larger rhythm of Julius Caesar can be variously interpreted. The action moves by one impetus in a barely checked crescendo, to the end of Act III. Acts IV and V are given to the murder's retribution. This unifies them. They are martial, more ordered, and consistently pitched in a lower key.[4]

Among critics who have considered the plot and structure of the play, many found a key to unity in the design of this tragedy. For example, Kittredge considered this to be supernaturalism evidenced by superstition, omens, and Caesar's

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[1] Op. cit., p. 190.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 191.

ghost.[1] Schanzer identified Shakespeare's choice of Brutus for the tragic hero as the key to the play's unity.[2]

Palmer viewed the characterization of Julius Caesar as binding the first and the second parts of the play together. The fact that Caesar would be mightier in death than in life was essential to the unity of the play. He also commented that the structure of a symphony might be applied to the play.[3]

Dover Wilson thought that the quarrel scene was one of the pillars of dramatic structure of the play. As a result of this function, it reinforced the growing sense of the inevitability of Caesarism. He also attacked a second point of criticism--the play's supposed lack of unity which had given rise to theories of two earlier dramas, one culminating in the death of Caesar, and the other culminating in the death and defeat of Brutus. He concluded that this impression was totally incorrect.[4]

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[1]Kittredge, op. cit., p. xviii.

[2]Ernest Schanzer, Problem Plays of Shakespeare (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1965), p. 67.

[3]Palmer, op. cit., p. 62.

[4]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xi.

Bonjour explained that the simplicity of Julius Caesar is a surface simplicity only. To close analysis, he felt, it revealed subtleties and complexities which rendered interpretation difficult. He perceived that no one character dominated the action throughout the play. He concluded that Cassius dominated Act I; Brutus dominated Act II; Antony dominated Act III; and Brutus and Cassius dominated Acts IV and V in making their tragic appeal.[1]

Views on political implications. Perhaps the political implications have aroused greater disagreement among modern critics than any other single aspect of the play. This was due in part to inadequately defined words such as liberty, tyranny, republican, freedom, and other words of this nature which limited the conspirators' conception of themselves[2] and also due in part to changing views in types of governmental structures since the dramatist conceived the play. The three major points of view have tended to polarize around Caesar as the proponent of the political implications, around Brutus as the proponent of the political implications, and around no political implications.

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[1]Adrien Bonjour, The Structure of Julius Caesar (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958), p. 33.

[2]Proser, op. cit., p. 21.

Dover Wilson regarded

> Julius Caesar as the greatest of political plays, not for its theme, shapely form, transparent style, but because public men are made convincingly private men; it brought the affairs of men and of Rome home to the business and bosoms of Elizabethans of London, in A.D. 1599, and men of all countries and generations since. It is one of the most brilliant and penetrating artistic reflections of political realities in the literature of the world.[1]

Palmer said that the greatness of the political character of Caesar was assumed throughout the play. Caesar's infirmities were to a greater or lesser degree inseparable from political success and the exercise of power. Caesar was both a private and public figure and he lived up to his own legend of greatness in the play.[2] This critic concluded his observation on this point by acknowledging that traits common to all dictators were found in Caesar.[3]

Whitaker[4] and Phillips[5] regarded the play as a vindication of absolute monarchy represented by Caesar and ordained by God.

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[1]Dover Wilson, op. cit., p. xiii.

[2]Palmer, op. cit., p. 35.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Whitaker, op. cit., p. 224.

[5]Phillips, op. cit., p. 174.

Ribner took exception to this conclusion of Whitaker and Phillips and pointed out that Caesar was not a king and in no place did Shakespeare call him one.[1]

Other critics considered the play as a vindication of the political nature of Brutus. Granville-Barker conceived of Brutus as a failure politically,[2] and H. B. Charlton saw Brutus as a political regicide in act.[3] Palmer saw the political character of Brutus presented by Shakespeare in perpetual contrast to other persons in the play.[4]

Vernon Hall[5] and Thomas Marc Parrott[6] viewed the play as totally devoid of any political implications. Parrott explained that there was the least resemblance possible between the decadent Roman republic and the popular monarchy of Elizabeth. "A true English conservative, Shakespeare was not likely to approve the classical virtue of tyrannicide,

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[1]Ribner, op. cit., p. 64.

[2]Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 168.

[3]H. B. Charlton, Shakespearean Tragedy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 77.

[4]Palmer, op. cit.

[5]Vernon Hall, Studies in the English Renaissance Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1916), p. 106.

[6]Thomas Marc Parrott, Shakespeare's Twenty-three Plays and the Sonnets (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 63.

and equally unlikely to favor the rule of the mob.[1] Parrott concluded that Shakespeare did not teach a political lesson. A political lesson based upon this analysis would have upset the English government.

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[1] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

A PROPOSED TEACHING PLAN FOR JULIUS CAESAR

The reader might be interested in some of the following teaching hints that indicate suggestions for the study of Julius Caesar and gave the writer some ideas for questions and supplementary activities.

As a major prerequisite in presenting the play, Bernstein suggested that the teacher be thoroughly acquainted with the subject of the play as well as that he be able to act the scenes with emotion if necessary and to be prepared with questions that intensify interest.[1] Maintaining interest throughout the study of the play is a major factor in the teacher's success in presenting the unit. Students frequently tend to lose interest after Antony's speech is given in Act III; therefore, it is essential to present Act IV and Act V with stimulation and excitement.

Mueller discovered a novel approach to the Shakespearean play in presenting Shakespearean drama from the point of view of a groundling, thus intensifying student interest.

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[1]Abraham Bernstein, Teaching English in High School (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 190.

Students can identify with the groundlings and thereby capture a part of Shakespeare's audience reaction to the play.[1]

In suggesting how to create interest in the study of the play, Holmes stated:

> When I am especially eager to have the class read Julius Caesar, I speak skeptically about their doing so. I argue that the plot is exceedingly melodramatic, involving murder, suicide, and adultery. I point out that the story is unoriginal and that the characters are often deplorably vulgar in speech.[2]

This approach is especially appropriate for a class that exhibits reluctance toward the study of Shakespearean drama.

During the study of Julius Caesar, students of Elizabeth Deur in Kalamazoo, Michigan, cut out political cartoons from newspapers and found appropriate Shakespearean lines as captions.[3] This activity was highly successful in relating meaning and ideas with contemporary caricatures.

Another device utilized in the study of the play is that which Noble employed, in posing the question of what might have happened if Brutus had remained for Mark Antony's

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[1]Richard J. Mueller, "A Groundling's Approach to Shakespeare," English Journal, LIII (November, 1964), 584-588.

[2]E. M. Holmes, "William Shakespeare Without Pain," English Journal, XLII (May, 1953), 270.

[3]J. N. Hook, The Teaching of High School English (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965), p. 180.

funeral oration.[1] This "if" question causes students to think about a possible alternative to the outcome of the plot.

In order to create student empathy with the setting and plot, let students imagine that they are twentieth century people carried back to ancient Rome by a time machine and that they then write letters to their twentieth century friends describing life in ancient Rome and the political situation.[2]

During the study of Julius Caesar, Lewis and Sisk suggested that the teacher should establish the fact that suicide was respectable and, in fact, expected of a defeated Roman general. Roman citizens of the period would consider a Roman general a coward if he had lost a military campaign and did not kill himself. A modern parallel is the concept of harakiri of the Japanese military command of World War II.[3]

A specific suggestion for student recitations of Antony's funeral speech aloud in class, was contributed by Bernstein. He suggested that a record such as Beethoven's Egmont Overture"

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[1]Donald Noble, "Rewriting the Great Plots," English Journal, L (December, 1961), 628.

[2]Hook, op. cit., p. 179.

[3]John S. Lewis and Jean C. Sisk, Teaching English 7-12 (New York: American Book Company, 1963), p. 212.

or Rossini's "William Tell Overture" be played because of the spirited, pell-mell nature of these compositions in relation to the situation of the speech.[1] This activity was especially appropriate with students who had a facility for memorization.

Several of these teaching hints have been used successfully by the writer in his presentation of the **Caesar** unit. The teaching plan that is presented in this chapter was based upon the observations and experiences of the investigator and upon suggestions of ideas mainly from Hook,[2] Loban,[3] and Poley.[4] The plan was executed with high school English classes on the sophomore (tenth grade) level composed of students with average academic abilities and interests.

The purpose of teaching this unit was to acquaint many students with the study of a Shakespearean play and to

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[1]Bernstein, op. cit.

[2]Hook, op. cit., pp. 179, 180, 269, 316.

[3]Walter Loban et al., Adventures in Appreciation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 504-580; Walter Loban et al., Teaching Language and Literature (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1961), pp. 405-413; Walter Loban et al., Teacher's Manual for Adventures in Appreciation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 184-230.

[4]Irvin G. Poley, "Drama in the Classroom," English Journal, XLIV (March, 1955), 148.

utilize the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening; however, the main emphasis was placed upon the improvement of reading skills. The unit was primarily teacher-planned and teacher-directed for the period of three weeks.

In selecting Julius Caesar as a requirement for the tenth grade English curriculum, consideration has been given to the relatively simple theme and easy and straight-forward language of the play as compared to Shakespeare's other plays.[1] The unit plan follows:

I. Aims

A. Understandings

1. To comprehend the theme of the play
2. To be aware of the plot structure
3. To comprehend the role of political machinations in the affairs of state

B. Skills

1. To develop critical reading awareness
2. To improve the ability to visualize scenes as presented in dramatic action of a play
3. To observe creation of character by a master craftsman

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[1]G. B. Harrison, "The Teaching of Shakespeare," English Journal, LII (September, 1963), 412.

C. Appreciations

1. To observe form in relation to content
2. To heighten awareness of dramatic irony
3. To sense Shakespeare's word music, rhythm, and imagery

II. Procedures

A. Introductory Activities

1. Presentation of introductory materials

a) Place headlines on the chalkboard in various colors, such as the following: Patriots Combine Against Oppressive Dictatorship, Assassins Attack Noble Leader, Plot Involves Trusted Officials Chaos Reigns in City. Ask students to guess the time and locale to which the headlines apply, and inquire if there is any contradiction in the headlines. Explain that if there were newspapers in Rome in 44 B.C., these headlines probably would have appeared after the assassination of Julius Caesar.[1] Draw a parallel to the assassination of President Kennedy in the United States and the immediate reaction thereafter by the citizens.

b) Select student volunteers to present oral summaries of the background information in the

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[1]Loban et al., op. cit., Teacher's Manual, p. 185.

textbook concerning William Shakespeare and Julius Caesar.

c) Assign three students to discuss the immediate situation in Rome prior to the action of the play in reference to the elimination of Pompey from power and the divided allegiance among the people to Caesar.

2. Selected student bibliography

Suggested readings:

a) Life of Shakespeare

(1) Marchette Chute, Shakespeare of London

(2) Charles Norman, Playmaker of Avon

(3) Hazelton Spencer, The Art and Life of William Shakespeare

b) Interpretation and staging of Shakespeare's plays

(1) Marchette Chute, Introduction to Shakespeare

(2) Louis Wright, Shakespeare for Everyman

(3) Margaret Webster, Shakespeare Without Tears

c) Other versions of the story of Julius Caesar

(1) Thornton Wilder, The Ides of March

(2) Rex Warner, The Young Caesar

(3) Plutarch, The Life of Julius Caesar

3. Preparation for understanding and reading the play

a) Show the film, The Assassination of Julius

Caesar, which is twenty-five minutes in length.[1] Discuss the film as background material for the major event of the play.

b) Read aloud to the class Act I, Scene i, emphasizing the use of the caesura in the speech of Marullus (lines 29-50)

c) Assign character parts to good readers to practice reading outside of class and to be prepared to read in class on the following day. Assign the reading of Scene ii of Act I to the entire class for the next day.

B. Developmental activities

1. Reading the play: Class members previously assigned parts read aloud Act I, Scene ii.

a) Place brief notes on the chalkboard covering basic terms, expressions, and ideas expressed in Act I, Scene ii, such as the following:

(1) Explanation of the term "ides" as the fifteenth of the month.

(2) Explanation that Brutus remains to talk to Cassius because he doesn't like sports.

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[1] The Assassination of Julius Caesar, an excerpt from the full length dramatization of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. 25 min., B&W, available for rental from International Film Bureau, Inc., 322 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The rental fee is $7.50.

(3) Explanation of the Latin inscription SPQR as Senatus Populus Que Romanus which translates into English as "The Roman Senate and the Roman People" revealing elements of democracy in Caesar's Rome.

(4) Indication of the looking glass or mirror imagery in Cassius's speech to Brutus in Act I, Scene ii, lines 71-82.

(5) Explanation of Caesar's physical or human weaknesses and disabilities which are: (Act I, Scene ii, lines 96-138)

(a) that he almost drowned once

(b) that he was sick with a fever

(c) that he had epileptic seizures

(d) that he was deaf in the left ear

b) Emphasize the dramatic situation of Cassius's cleverly persuading Brutus to consider Caesar as a usurper of political power.

c) Indicate the following significant quotations from this scene:

(1) "Beware the ides of March." (Act I, Scene ii, line 21)[1]

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[1]Loban et al., op. cit., Adventures in Appreciation, p. 514.

(2) Why, man he doth bestride the narrow world/ Like a Colossus, and we petty men/Walk under his huge legs and peep about/To find ourselves dishonorable graves. . . . The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,/But in ourselves that we are underlings. (Act I, Scene ii, lines 141-147)[1]

(3) "Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;/ He thinks too much; such men are dangerous." (Act I, Scene ii, lines 200-201)[2]

(4) ". . . it was Greek to me." (Act I, Scene ii, line 274)[3]

d) Assign the reading of Act I, Scene iii.

2. Continue the reading of the play by concluding the reading of Act I.

a) Stress reasons for the growth of the conspiracy such as the following:

(1) Caesar's physical inadequacies

(2) Cassius's personal dislike for Caesar

(3) Brutus's concern in reference to Caesar's unchecked ambition for more power (Act I, Scene ii)

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[1] Ibid., p. 517. [2] Ibid., p. 519.

[3] Ibid., p. 521.

b) Emphasize the initial character portrayals of Caesar, Antony, Cassius, and Brutus such as the following:

(1) Caesar is portrayed as a sick, old man desirous of greater political power.

(2) Antony is portrayed as a "yes" man and playboy. (Act I, Scene ii)

(3) Cassius is portrayed as scheming against Caesar for personal reasons.

(4) Brutus is portrayed as a deep thinker opposed to Caesar for political reasons.

c) Announce a test to be given over Act I.

3. Evaluation of Act I

a) Administer an objective-essay test.

(1) Sample objective questions

(a) Name one physical weakness and one physical disability of Caesar.

(b) Give the meaning in Latin and English of SPQR.

(2) Sample essay questions

(a) Explain Caesar's reaction to the soothsayer's warning.

(b) Explain why Marullus is angry with the citizens.

b) Assign new parts for Act II to volunteers and

assign the reading of Act II, Scene i, to the entire class for the next day.

c) Announce the assignment of optional activities in relation to the study of Shakespeare to be due upon the conclusion of the study of the play. Examples of these activities follow:

(1) A written or oral report on the life of William Shakespeare and the era in which he lived such as:

(a) A discussion of the questionable authorship of the plays attributed to him.

(b) The influence of Elizabethan styles of dress as seen in the plays.

(c) Popular entertainments in Shakespeare's time and reasons for the popularity of his plays in his own time.

(2) A written or oral report on the life of Julius Caesar and the era in which he lived such as:

(a) His military career as exemplified in the campaigns of the Gallic wars.

(b) Caesar's adventures as an adolescent in Rome.

(c) A history of the Roman form of government and the importance of a military and noble background to a potential leader.

(3) A model of the Globe Theater

(4) Paper mache dolls dressed in togas

(5) A debate on the following question: Was the murder of Julius Caesar justifiable under the circumstances?

(6) Rewriting of a scene from the play in contemporary language

4. Reading of Act II, Scene i, in class

a) Observe how Brutus has become involved in the conspiracy and his responsibility for the crucial decisions of the conspiracy.

b) Observe the love and devotion which Portia manifests toward Brutus and his gentleness toward his servant Lucius.

c) Assign the reading of Act II, Scene ii, for the next day.

5. Reading of Act II, Scene ii, in class

a) Observe the love, devotion, and concern for Caesar which Calpurnia manifests in this scene in her desire to prevent him from going to the Senate.

b) Indicate memorable quotations from Act II, Scenes i and ii, such as the following:

(1) "Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,/ Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds."

(Act II, Scene i, lines 167-168)[1]

Brutus refers to the forthcoming murder of Caesar in the preceding quotation.

(2) "Cowards die many times before their deaths;/ The valiant never taste of death but once." (Act II, scene ii, lines 33-34)[2]

Caesar refers to his decision to go to the Senate in the preceding quotation.

c) Assign the reading of Act II, Scenes iii and iv for the following day and announce a twenty minute objective quiz over Act II. Request volunteers to select character parts in Act III.

6. Twenty minute objective quiz over Act II; read Act III, Scene i, aloud in class.

a) Sample questions are the following:

(1) Give an example of an anachronism from Act II, Scene i.

(2) What does the cypress tree symbolize in Brutus's garden?

b) Correct the quiz papers in class.

c) Begin reading of Act III, Scene i.

d) Suggest optional activity of memorization of

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[1] Ibid., p. 529.

[2] Ibid., p. 534.

Antony's forum oration (Act III, Scene ii, lines 72-106) to be delivered orally or written in class three days before the end of the unit. Credit to be given as follows:

(1) Triple credit for reciting the speech in front of the class as this is the most desirable end result of memory work.

(2) Double credit for reciting the speech privately to the teacher.

(3) Single credit for writing the speech.

e) Assign the reading of Act III, Scene ii, for the following day.

7. Read Act III, Scenes i and ii.

a) Discuss the forum speeches of Brutus and Mark Antony in some detail, covering the following points:

(1) Brutus's forum speech (III, ii, 14-40)

(a) Rhetorical device of parallel sentence structure (repetition of prepositional phrases)

(b) Alliteration (base-bondman)

(c) Content analysis (ideas expressed)

(2) Mark Antony's forum speech (III, ii, 75-109)

(a) Awareness of the subtle changes in meaning of each repetition of the word "honorable."

(b) The dramatic irony inherent in Antony's choice of words as the speech progresses.

(c) The rhythms which are almost incantations, phrases with such subtlety of intonation that the meaning is completely reversed, the direct appeal to sentiment, pity, gratitude, horror, and greed, the rise and fall of tone, the catch in the voice, the histrionic tears.[1]

b) Assign individual review of Act III in preparation for an essay-objective examination on the following day.

8. Evaluation of Act III

a) Administer an essay-objective test.

(1) Sample essay questions

(a) Explain the reasons for the effectiveness of Antony's speech.

(b) Discuss the reasons for the failure of Brutus's speech.

(2) Sample objective questions

(a) What is the excuse that the conspirators have to close in on Caesar?

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[1]Harrison, op. cit., p. 416.

(b) How do the people of Rome react immediately to the news of the assassination of Julius Caesar?

9. Recitation or writing of Antony's speech

10. Assignment of theme topics

Themes will be due on the last day of the unit. Each student will select one of the following topics to discuss and defend as a possible theme of the play in a 250 word paper:

a) The result of effective oratory and propaganda upon the masses.

b) The evils of dictatorship.

c) The decay of a great republic, with its leaders and statesmen engaged in intrigues and conspiracies to gain power; and the tragedy of a great man caught between the various factions struggling for power.

d) The error of thinking that if your goal is virtuous, any means used to achieve it are justifiable.

e) The lonely world of a man of honor surrounded by lesser men of selfish motives.[1]

11. Reading and listening to Act IV

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[1]Loban, op. cit., Teacher's Manual, pp. 192-193.

a) Play the Orson Welles disc recording[1] of Act IV and have students follow the action in their textbooks. Discuss the following important points of Act IV:

(1) The quarrel between Brutus and Cassius

(2) Portia's death

(3) The appearance of Caesar's ghost

b) Assign the reading of Act V for the next day.

12. Reading and listening to Act V

a) Play the Orson Welles disc recording[2] of Act V and have students follow the action in their textbooks. Discuss the following important points of Act V:

(1) The verbal battle between Antony, Octavius, Brutus, and Cassius

(2) The death of Cassius

(3) The death of Brutus

b) Select certain students to dramatize the following scenes:

(1) Act III, Scene i, Caesar's murder

(2) Act III, Scene ii, the forum speeches of Brutus and Antony

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[1] Orson Welles, Julius Caesar, Mercury Theater Production, Columbia Records, Box L, Bridgeport, Connecticut. No. OL 5390.

[2] Ibid.

C. Culminating Activities

1. Review of the play and notes

a) Play the disc recording, Julius Caesar.[1]

b) Have selected students present a dramatization of Act III, Scenes i and ii.

c) Announce that themes and projects are due on the next day and that a final examination will be given over the play.

2. Final examination

a) Sample of objective test questions

(1) Multiple Choice: Underline the correct answer.

(a) Act III is known as the act of (a) introduction (b) ascent (c) denouement (d) climax (e) catastrophe

(b) In the final speech of Caesar, he is portrayed as (a) haughty (b) timid (c) afraid (d) conceited (e) a tired old man.

(2) Quotations:

(a) "Let me have men about me that are fat,/ Yond _____ has a lean and hungry look;/ He thinks too much; such men are dangerous."

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[1] Julius Caesar, Dublin Gate Theatre Production, Many Voices 10A, Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., New York.

i) Who says this? _____

ii) To whom is it said? _____

iii) Of whom is he speaking? _____[1]

(b) "Why, man, he doth bestride this narrow world/Like a Colossus, and we petty men. . . dishonorable graves."

i)Who says this? _____

ii) To whom is it said? _____

iii) Of whom is he speaking? _____[2]

b) Sample subjective questions:

(1) Essay

(a) Discuss the role of the supernatural in the play, making specific references to the acts and scenes in which the supernatural appears and the influence of this aspect upon the course of events

(b) in the play.

(b) Explain the personality differences and philosophical idealism in the growth and development of Brutus and Cassius indicating your reasons for the failure of the conspiracy.

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[1]Poley, op. cit.

[2]Ibid.

(c) Discuss the treatment of nature in this play compared to the treatment of nature in Silas Marner.

(2) Character Sketches:

(a) Trace the subtle character development of Mark Antony reflecting upon the image he presents to others about him.

(b) Compare the picture Shakespeare gives us of Julius Caesar with the actual historical personage and explain why Shakespeare altered history.

III. Evaluation of the unit based on:

A. Optional activities and projects

B. Participation in class discussion and reading character parts aloud in class

C. Memorization of Mark Antony's speech (Act III, Scene ii, lines 72-106)

D. Themes

E. Examinations

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A study of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar in conjunction with the preparation of a plan for teaching the play to high school sophomores led to an investigation into major criticisms of the work. By reviewing the background material concerning critics views of Caesar and Brutus in Shakespeare's era and by reviewing major modern criticism concerning major points of disagreement among critics, the writer supplemented his existing knowledge for a background study of the play.

In addition to the preceding elements, the review of background material revealed a number of possible sources for Shakespeare's work in the historical, literary, and dramatic traditions besides Plutarch's Lives. It was learned that Shakespeare made his version of the story of Julius Caesar more elaborate than any previous version.

In the development of the teaching plan, the writer attempted to include ideas and suggestions that are appropriate to the interests of students. Provision has been made to involve students as much as possible in the study of the play through oral reading, recitation, and dramatization of portions of Julius Caesar.

A major goal in the organization of the teaching plan was to stress understanding and appreciation of Shakespearean

drama. This was done through the use of contemporary versions, disc recordings, and a film of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

The teaching plan also included a statement of the aims of the student in studying Shakespeare, the procedures for the teacher to follow in presenting the unit, and the evaluation to be used in completing the unit.

In presenting a study of this nature, the writer hopes that the teaching plan may be useful to a teacher who finds little time to organize materials.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF RECENT PRODUCTIONS

Introduction. The staging and costuming of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar has had a rich and varied tradition. The play has been performed numerous times in this country and abroad. The question of costume has raised difficulties. Shakespeare, more or less dressed his Romans in Elizabethan clothes. "We cannot simply ignore Shakespeare's convention in favor of our own, which pictures the ancient Roman, bare-headed, clean-shaven, and wrapped in a toga. Quite possibly the Roman Senate assembled did not look like the cooling room of a Turkish bath."[1]

Three dominant strains of costuming have emerged in the modern period. The first of these was the staging and costuming in the classical Roman style with white columns and togas. The second strain, prevalent in the early part of this century, was considered to be the Romano-Elizabethan style described by Granville-Barker as "a mixture of helmet, cuirass, trunk hose, stockings and sandals, like nothing that was ever worn, but very wearable and delightful to look at."[2] The third strain was a combination of creative

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[1] Granville-Barker, op. cit., p. 217.

[2] Ibid., p. 239.

inventiveness and topical allusion on the part of the designer to include current events of the twentieth century.

Orson Welles, 1937, New York. Orson Welles produced the play in modern dress complete with machine guns. The setting was Chicago and Welles played Brutus. The drama was presented as the democratic doing-in of a diabolical dictator.[1] This production was an attempt to focus on the contemporary history of the gangster era in Chicago.

Fritz Kortner, 1955, Munich, Germany. Kortner focused his production on the Nazi era. "Antony's quarters were super-efficient, super-disciplined, the spirit of spit-and-polish; in contrast, Brutus's were poetically poor.[2] Rome's center, drab in itself, was threatened by creeping poverty, filth, and ruin; the plains of Philippi were filled with mutilated corpses. This production bore little resemblance to any preceding performance and a critic said that the way Kortner played Caesar the public would immediately have understood that Caesar had to be murdered.[3]

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[1] Allardyce Nicoll (ed.), Shakespeare Survey (London: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 12.

[2] Newsweek, VL, 106 (May 23, 1955), pp. 106-107.

[3] Ibid.

Richard Easton, 1969, San Diego, California. Easton presented the play in traditional Roman classical style at the Old Globe Theatre in the twentieth San Diego National Shakespeare Festival in which he played Brutus. He found "honor" to be the impulse and excuse for all the actions in the play. Easton took issue with all those who give the play a specific generality in making the play seem to be about the rise of fascism and setting it in Mussolini's Italy, for example. Easton found this type of presentation to limit the scope and richness of characterization that Shakespeare intended when he wrote the play.[1]

The writer attended opening night performance of this production of Easton's and observed the strong will and determination evident in Easton's portrayal of Brutus, the frustration of Cassius, and the haughty power displayed by Caesar. The play generally followed the Roman classical style of production and was well received by the audience.

Edward Payson Call, 1969, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Director Call chose to use creative inventiveness and topical allusion in his production of Julius Caesar at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. Call took issue with the classical formalism inherent in the miles of unbleached

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[1]Richard Easton, "Julius Caesar, The Actor/Director Comments," Old Globe Theatre Program, June, 1969, pp. 8-9.

muslin in the Roman style of presentation. He felt that it was difficult to differentiate between characters when they were all dressed alike.[1]

Designer Carrie Fishbein Robbins knocked the play off its traditional Roman toga-draped shelf and produced a visual setting of late nineteenth century South America. The setting became a baroque European symbol of the Spanish conquistadores who took over South America from the natives. The visual marriage of European culture and the culture indigenous to the Latin American countries was expressed in clothing, natural colors, and traditional decorations. The senators were adorned in closely tailored European cutaway form; the military men of higher rank were attired in clothing along sophisticated European military lines and cut. Caesar became a bridge between the two cultures--a smartly tailored and gilded figure sporting a ceremonial cape figured with images not unlike the gylphs of Tonatiuh, Aztec Sun God. The Mayan-Aztec culture figured in the dress of the natives and the huge statue of Tonatiuh was located center rear stage.[2]

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[1]Edward Payson Call, "Where Is Rome?", Minnesota Theatre Company Program, June, 1969, p. 21.

[2]Carrie Fishbein Robbins, "Costume Designer's Notes: Julius Caesar," Minnesota Theatre Company Program, June, 1969, p. 21.

The writer attended the symposium performance of this production and observed creative inventiveness and topical allusion in action. The play opened with natives dressed in feathers and loincloths celebrating Caesar's triumph over Pompey. Fruit peddlers and flower sellers and an American tourist were in evidence. A folk dance and chant were part of the scene. Flavious and Marullus appeared dressed as Roman Catholic padres. Caesar appeared attired in white pants and boots, majestic in his splendor. Antony first made his entrance attired only in a loincloth, but shortly thereafter threw on a white bearskin robe. Brutus was seen accoutered in black morning coat and pin-striped pants with a red sash, banner, and gold braid. Cassius was dressed in a corduroy coat of a grayish green color, a blue silk paisley vest, light gray corduroy pants, and a gold watch chain. Casca appeared with a Van Dyke beard and long sideburns. Lucius played upon a guitar rather than a lute. Flaming torches and pistol shots were evident after Antony's oration. By far the most interesting departure from traditional presentations that Director Call added to the play occurred at the very end of the play. He had Antony kick the dead body of Brutus off the stage. His justification for this action was his feeling that Antony really felt contempt for Brutus, even after the noble Roman speech which Call felt was a sham to lure Brutus's followers to Antony's military forces. This little touch

aroused a storm of protest in the symposium which was held immediately after the performance.

Participants in the symposium were Edward Payson Call, director, Mayor Naftalin of Minneapolis, Charles Knolte, Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, and Jay Anderson, public relations director of the Minnesota Theatre Company.

Professor Knolte asked if Call were justified in taking the setting out of ancient Rome and placing it in a banana republic in South America. Knolte said that Shakespeare himself slandered the real Caesar and not Director Call. Knolte compared the real Rome of 44 B.C. to a mixture of the slums of London in the 1850's and the slave market of New Orleans of the same period. He felt Caesar was much like Batista and Peron. He suggested a better modern title of "How Not to Succeed in Not Making a Revolution."

Mayor Naftalin said that the locale can be anywhere in the world. Naftalin's idea of a modern day Caesar was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He drew the following parallels: The depression was indeed a time of trouble: the bonus marches on Washington, D. C. disturbed the old regime; Roosevelt himself was a defector from the establishment, and he had great political power. The mayor felt that many among the old regime wanted to kill Roosevelt. Naftalin pointed out that the spirits of the two Kennedys and Martin

Luther King were stronger in death than in life. He felt that Shakespeare considered the life of the public man to be more important than the life of the private man in the play.

Knolte took issue with Call over Antony's kicking of Brutus's corpse. Knolte felt that kicking the corpse demeaned the play and changed Shakespeare's original intention. Antony did not maintain the pose of decency in kicking the body down the stairs in a cynical, sardonic fashion.

Call answered Knolte by saying that Antony really hated Brutus and he needed to win Brutus's friends over to his side. "Antony was a terrible bastard."

APPENDIX B

JULIUS CAESAR QUESTIONNAIRE

The writer distributed this questionnaire to his students upon their conclusion of the study of the play. Some of the additional comments of students are included in order to indicate various reactions to the study of the unit on Shakespeare.

1. Did you enjoy studying Julius Caesar?
2. Was three weeks too long a period of time devoted to the play?
3. Would you favor studying the play earlier in the semester?
4. What was your reaction to memorizing Antony's funeral speech?
5. Can you explain why we read this play as Shakespeare wrote it?
6. Did you understand the play? What did you learn from the play?
7. Did you approve of reading the first three acts of the play aloud in class and listening to the last two acts on records?
8. What suggestions could you make for the improvement of teaching or presenting the play?
9. Would you read on your own or go out of your way to see another play of Shakespeare's?

10. Do modernized versions, comedy take-offs, projects, et cetera, help or hinder your understanding, appreciation and/or enjoyment of the play?

Additional student comments. Students were asked to comment on the back of their questionnaires if they wished to do so. The following are some sample comments:

> I don't think students should be made to read this play, because they really don't enjoy it at all. It has no meaning for teenagers at all. It may have meaning for college students, but not for teenagers. Students really don't want to know about Julius Caesar. They could care less about him. Maybe students should know the basic things, but not be made to read and memorize such speeches. After all, who talks like that nowadays? I would rather write themes. Julius Caesar has no meaning to me and I couldn't understand anything of the play. So, when the test came, I nearly failed it. Learning those speeches was of no importance at all. Who cares who said them? The play just took up three weeks of our time and I hardly learned anything.

> I think it would really depend upon what kind of a class you have regarding how much time you spend on the play and how much explaining you do of the play. I think it also depends on how much interest the class shows for the play, and then you can act accordingly.

> I would have hated to read the play on my own, but since we read it and discussed it in class, I think it was pretty good.

> Why did we have to study this Julius Caesar play? Some kids understand this stuff and others don't. So why do we have to learn it? We are not living in Shakespeare's age; we are living in a modern age. I actually learned very little of the play. I can't seem to understand Shakespeare. It's not only the words either. It just doesn't sink in.